

# Rockaway Beach

## People and Place

### Location

Rockaway Beach is in Tillamook County on Oregon's northern coast, 14 miles north of the City of Tillamook on U.S. Highway 101 between Nehalem Bay on the north and Tillamook Bay on the south. The community is known for the 7-mile strip of beach it abuts. Located 87 miles west of Portland, Rockaway Beach encompasses 1.5 square miles of land and 0.08 square miles of water. Rockaway Beach's geographic coordinates are lat 45°36'49"N, long 123°56'30"W.

### Demographic Profile

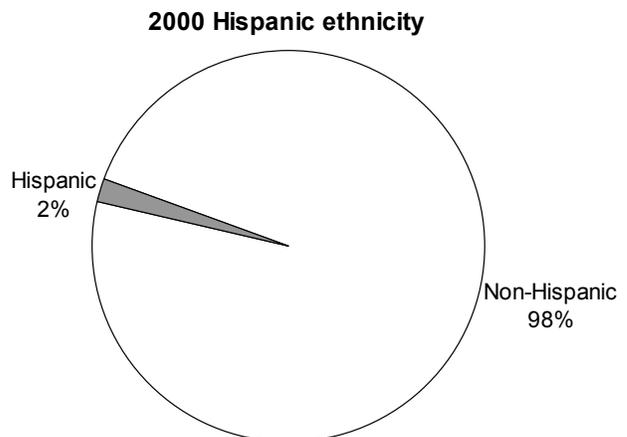
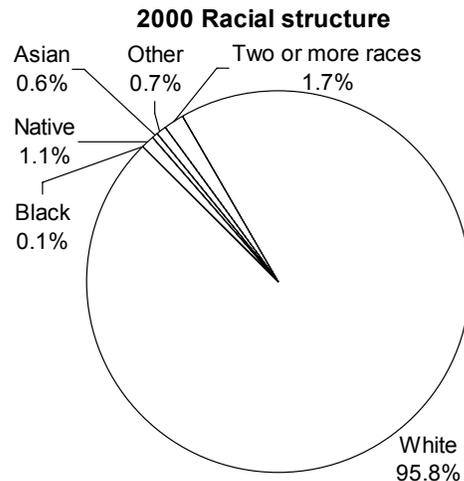
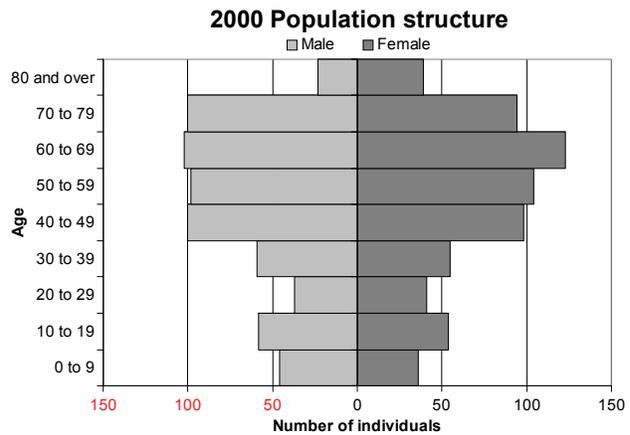
According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Rockaway Beach was 1,267, an increase from 906 in 1980. The 2000 U.S. Census shows a relatively even gender distribution, 50.8% female and 49.2% male. The median age was 52.2 years, notably higher than the national median age of 35.3. Of the population 18 years of age and older, 82.6% had a high school education or higher, 15.7% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 4.3% had a graduate or professional degree; the national averages were 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

The majority of the racial structure of Rockaway Beach was white (95.8%), followed by people who identified with two or more races (1.7%), American Indian and Alaska Native (1.1%), people who identified with some other race (0.7%), Asian (0.6%), and black (0.1%). Two percent identified as Hispanic. Slightly less than two percent (1.7%) of the population were foreign-born.

In 2000 75% of the population lived in family households.

### History

Long before Euro-Americans came to the Pacific Northwest, Native Americans inhabited Tillamook County. Groups such as the Tillamook, Nehalem, and Nestucca fished and hunted throughout the area. These peoples had a close relationship with the sea and area waterways, as evident in the boats they built. Their dugout canoes ranged from tiny vessels used for duck hunting to large canoes used for long distance travel to California. The Indians of Tillamook Bay died in large numbers due to European diseases. Their population was estimated to be around 2,200 at the turn of the nineteenth



century but declined to one-tenth of that size by the mid-1800s.

Although Captain Robert Gray is credited with being the first Euro-American to land in Tillamook Bay in 1788, it was not until the middle of the 1880s that white settlers came to the area. The entrance to the bay is recognized as challenging today and was identified as perilous in Gray's time, according to an account by a member of his crew who told of an awkwardly situated shoal, narrow entrance, and strong tide.

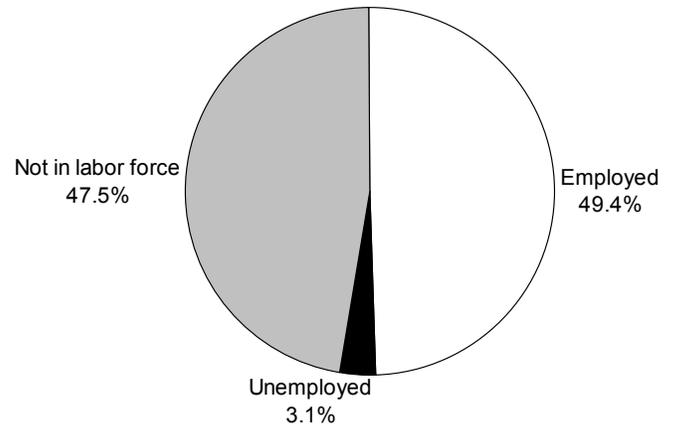
In 1853 the Oregon territorial government created Tillamook County. The county's earliest industries were shipping, logging, fishing, farming, and dairy. Fishing played a key role as it was the major avenue for bringing cash into the area. Fish caught in the region's coastal waters, bays, and rivers were canned in numerous canneries throughout the area. Middlemen bought the packaged fish and sold them in Willamette Valley, south of Rockaway Beach. These funds enabled the development of other enterprises and aided the growth of Tillamook Bay communities.

Two industries developed alongside fishing in Tillamook County: dairy and lumber. The dairy industry thrived by producing cheese which could withstand long storage periods for distribution. The lumber industry took off in the 1890s with the production of containers for dairy, fish, and other products. In 1911 the Pacific Railway and Navigation Company constructed a railway from Portland to Tillamook. This reliable source of transportation further facilitated growth.

The Rockaway Beach area remained sparsely populated up until the early 1900s. The Pacific Railway and Navigation Company's rail line made the coastal communities of northern Oregon more accessible to settlers as well. Rockaway Beach was connected by rail to Portland in 1912. The Ocean Crest apartments were built in Rockaway that year to house railway workers. The area also became a summer tourist destination, as Portland residents began to spend summers in the area. Men who worked in Portland during the week would take the Friday train ("the daddy train") to Rockaway to be with their families for the weekend.

Residents have most likely participated in the commercial fishing industry at the nearby ports of Garibaldi and Nehalem for some time (see the Garibaldi community profile for more historical information on fishing); however, fieldwork indicates both sport and commercial fishing have become severely limited in the area. Unfortunately, little information could be found on the community's history. Rockaway Beach's tourist industry relies on the area's sportfishing as an attraction. The significance of sportfishing to the community's tourist industry is perhaps most evident by the large

**2000 Employment structure**



volume of sportfishing licenses (1,027) sold by local vendors in 2000.

Rockaway Beach is becoming increasingly known as a retirement community, with 50% of its households used seasonally and the population's median age at 52 in 2000. The community holds several annual festivals and celebrations, a kite festival, an arts and crafts festival, a 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks show, and an Oktoberfest celebration. These festivals highlight the importance of tourism to the area's current economy.<sup>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</sup>

## Infrastructure

### Current Economy

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 49.4% of Rockaway Beach's potential labor force 16 years of age and older were employed, 3.1% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 6.0% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 47.5% were not in the labor force. Top employment sectors were arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services (17.7%), government (15.2%), retail trade (15.2%), and educational, health, and social services (14.7%). Natural resource jobs including agriculture, fishing, forestry, and hunting employed 3.6%, but this percentage may be artificially low because many fishermen are self-employed and are underrepresented in the data.

Tillamook County's principal industries in 1998 were agriculture, lumber, recreation and tourism, and food processing. The five largest employers in Rockaway Beach in 2003 were Tillamook Country Smoker (160), McRae & Sons Inc. (90), Garibaldi Dry Dock Inc. (65), Nehalem Telephone and Telegraph Company (15); and Nehalem Bay Ready Mix (6). Fieldwork indicates the Garibaldi dry dock was sold and is no longer in operation.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the per capita income in 1999 was \$17,766 and the median household income was \$29,798. In 1999 10.8% of the population lived below the poverty level. In 2000 Rockaway Beach had 1,573 housing units, of which 40.4% were occupied and 59.6% were vacant. Of the occupied units, 67.2% were by owner and 32.8% were by renter. The large number of the vacancies (85.5%) were due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

## Governance

The community of Rockaway Beach was founded in 1909. The city incorporated in 1942 and operates under a mayoral form of government. Oregon has no general sales tax but levies a 1% tax on overnight lodging. See the Governance subsection (page 43) in the Overview section for a more detailed discussion of taxes affecting fishermen and processors in Oregon.

The nearest office for the National Marine Fisheries Service is 50 miles away in Astoria. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is headquartered in Salem; however, the North Coast Watershed District Office is 14 miles away in Tillamook. The closest U.S. Coast Guard Station is 5 miles away in Garibaldi. Meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management and North Pacific Fishery Management councils are held in Portland which is also home to the district office for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

## Facilities

Rockaway Beach is accessible primarily by land and air. It lies along U.S. Highway 101 and is 38 miles away from the closest airport certified for carrier operations in Astoria. The nearest airport offering international service is Portland International Airport. Three smaller public-use airports are within a 30 minute drive from Rockaway Beach in Manzanita, Tillamook, and Seaside.

Rockaway Beach is in the Neah-Kah-Nie School District. The community houses the district's junior and senior high school (7–12 grades) but the district's two elementary schools are in nearby Garibaldi and Nehalem. Fieldwork indicates a new junior high school was under construction in early 2007.

The Tillamook Public Utility District provides electricity. The City of Rockaway Beach provides the water supply and wastewater services and its police department administers public safety. The nearest hospital, Tillamook County General Hospital, is in Tillamook, 15 miles to the south. Additional hospitals are in Seaside and Astoria, 24 and 40 miles away respectively. Overnight accommodations in the Rockaway Beach area include at least a dozen hotels and

numerous rental homes. Three parks are suitable for recreational vehicle use and camping.

## Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

### Commercial Fishing

No commercial landings were made in Rockaway Beach in 2000, however, residents did participate in West Coast commercial fisheries as vessel owners and permit holders.

Rockaway Beach residents owned 20 vessels in 2000 that participated in the region's fisheries, and 9 participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery. The number of vessels owned by Rockaway Beach residents that participated in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) in 2000 was: crab 0/5/1, salmon 0/15/2, and shellfish NA/1/NA.<sup>6</sup>

One Rockaway Beach resident held a single federal groundfish fishery permit in 2000. Recorded data indicates the number of individual community members holding state permits in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab 0/1/0, salmon 0/12/1, shellfish 0/6/NA, and shrimp 1/0/0.<sup>7</sup>

Four permits were registered to Rockaway Beach residents in 2000, of which three were registered state permits. According to recorded data the number of state permits in each fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: salmon 0/0/2 and shrimp 1/0/0.<sup>8</sup>

### Sportfishing

Three licensed charter vessel businesses operated in Rockaway in 2003, however, all vessels were homeported in Garibaldi. Presently, Rockaway Beach has nine licensing vendors. In 2000 active agents sold 1,023 sportfishing licenses at a value of \$17,979.

### Subsistence

Local community members, both tribal and nontribal, may engage in subsistence fishing for marine and stream resources in Rockaway Beach and the surrounding area. Specific information on subsistence fishing in Rockaway Beach is not discussed in detail in this community profile due to the lack of available data.

## Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

### Commercial Fishing

Rockaway Beach community members were not involved in North Pacific commercial fisheries during 2000.

## Sportfishing

Rockaway Beach residents purchased 11 Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000.

### Notes

1. J. Gilden (ed.). 1999. Oregon's changing coastal fishing communities. Online at <http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/sgpubs/onlinepubs/o99001.html> [accessed 25 January 2007].
2. L. Tobe. 2003. Garibaldi, Tillamook County, OR. Online at [http://www.fcresearch.org/neai/OR\\_case\\_studies/Garibaldi.pdf](http://www.fcresearch.org/neai/OR_case_studies/Garibaldi.pdf) [accessed 25 January 2007].
3. Garibaldi Chamber of Commerce. No date. Welcome to Garibaldi: The Pacific Ocean gateway-history. Online at <http://www.ci.garibaldi.or.us/history.html> [accessed 25 January 2007].
4. M. Guardino III and Rev. M. Riedel. Sovereigns of themselves: A liberating history of Oregon and its coast. Vol. III. Online at <http://www2.wi.net/~census/lesson36.html> [accessed 25 January 2007].
5. Rockaway Beach Chamber of Commerce. No date. Home. Online at <http://www.rockawaybeach.net/index.htm> [accessed 25 January 2007].
6. NA refers to data that were not available, for example, due to few recorded permit numbers or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.
7. See note 6.
8. See note 6.